

ACEH update

Edition 5 / March 2006

Headline



Twenty five civil society organizations (CSOs) signed the Ar-Raniry Declaration at the Ar-Raniry State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Banda Aceh

Aceh CSOs Sign Good Governance Declaration

The participation of civil society organizations in the recovery and reconstruction of Aceh is becoming increasingly more important. Twenty-five civil society organizations (CSOs) committed to a declaration to strengthen the role of citizens in the process and to promote good governance in Aceh.

The declaration, signed in the Ar-Raniry State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Banda Aceh, calls for transparency and a stronger legal framework supporting public participation in local government decision making processes. Signateurs included Gerak Aceh, ADF, PWI, FK PSM NAD, SORAK, Bungoeng Jeumpa Foundation, PUGAR, Kata Hati Institute, Leuham Aceh, PW PII NAD, KADIN Aceh, HKTI, PW NU NAD, Rabithah Thaliban (RTA), YPK, MATARADJA, P4L, P2ESM, FPA, Insan Cita Madani Foundation (YICM), and Demokrat NAD. The organizations formed a working group and an issues-based strategy to further the declaration's principles.

The declaration marked the closing of a provincial workshop to

Content



2 Activity

- Synergy and Understanding the Key



3

- 1,384 Public Servants and Community Representatives Improve their Governance Skills



4

Interview

- Meuraxa Subdistrict Head Drs. Tarmizi Yahya, MM: "Forum Results in Less Overlapping"

strengthen civic engagement in rebuilding Aceh, and was supported by the Aceh Development Foundation (ADF), Insan Cita Madani Foundation (YICM), and USAID's Local Government Support Program. It was the last in a series of programs in Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, Aceh Jaya, Aceh Barat and Nagan Raya.

Roys Vahlevi M., of Insan Citra Madani Foundation (YICM), said "CSOs are part of civil society, thus they must take an active role in the policy making process to carry out good governance." However, CSOs face challenges, particularly in coordination and human resources, limiting their ability to effec-

tively engage with local government in the policy arena. "Therefore, CSOs' capacities as well as networks must be strengthened," stressed Roys.

The end of protracted conflict and the urgency of the recovery efforts have opened up new opportunities for civil society and local government collaboration. "After the conflict and tsunami, there is a spirit from Acehnese people to recover from the difficult situation. We must participate actively in the development of every sector and in building democracy," Roys said.

Activity KIP-NAD Prepares for Direct Election



LGSP and KIP-NAD anticipate the challenges of direct local election with a workshop.

The Independent Election Commission of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (KIP-NAD), supported by LGSP-USAID, held a two-day workshop to develop their elections management workplan and finalize a communications strategy for the upcoming direct election of the regional administration heads. The program was part of KIP's preparation to hold the direct elections in NAD.

Twenty members of the election commission and secretariat convened at the Sulthan Hotel in Banda Aceh on November 30. Communication consultants from *Bamboedoea Communications Jakarta*, and seasoned elections specialists shared their voter information experiences from the 2004 national and regional DPRD election, as well as their management experience in the 2005 direct elections in other provinces.

"The direct elections in Aceh face many challenges, such as the tsunami that destroyed physical infrastructure, and poses difficulties in managing election logistics," said Dicky Dooradi, the workshop facilitator. In addition, the large number of displaced persons brings a unique challenge in the registration of voters and the holding of elections. "We are happy that KIP is anticipating these challenges with good planning," said Mr. Dooradi.

M. Jafar, KIP chairman, said that he appreciated LGSP support and technical assistance in the workshop. "We thank LGSP for its workshop, which is very important to the work of KIP," said Jafar.

Synergy and Understanding the Key

What is needed by communities to speed up the reconstruction process in Aceh after the tsunami? Synergy and understanding is the key. To achieve that, media, non-government organizations (NGOs), and local government officials from the City of Banda Aceh met to explore opportunities for working together to rebuild Aceh. Present were participants from Aceh Development Fund (ADF), Forum LSM Aceh, UNIFEM, CCDE, OXFAM, Forsikal, the media organizations Pantau Foundation, Info Aceh, Rakyat Aceh, ARNet, Modus, Media Center AJI, and Banda Aceh government representatives.

Held at the LGSP office, and facilitated by the Indonesian Media Law and Policy Center (IMLPC),



A meeting among press, NGOs and the Banda Aceh City Government held in the LGSP office

the participants examined the interdependency between their different organizations. NGOs and the government need the press to disseminate their efforts to rebuild Aceh, and the press relies on NGOs and the government as sources of news.

However, constructive relationships are not always possible due to misperception and misunderstanding. "We, the press, have difficulty in getting access to local government officials," Husni Arifin of the AJI Aceh media center said. He noted that the press needs to verify and confirm their stories. He suggested that both local governments and NGOs be more transparent and accessible to the press to improve the accuracy and quality of reporting.

On the other hand, the NGOs and government reported that they often feel disappointed with the accuracy of reporting in the media. Citing a recent report that the City Mayor used public funds

to support a trip abroad to share the City's experience in rebuilding in the wake of the disaster, Banda Aceh government spokesman Drs. Mahdi said that, "The truth is the Mayor was invited by a foreign NGO to make a presentation on the reconstruction plan of Aceh and the trip was financed by the foreign NGO." It was an important event to generate assistance in support of the plan and to highlight the fortitude and achievements of the City's residents in rebuilding their lives and communities.

A more constructive and professional relationship can be achieved through greater transparency and open communication. "So, why don't we do create greater synergy between us?" suggested Christiana Chelsia Chan, Executive Director of IMLPC. The advice has been heeded and the participant now meet monthly to share information and experiences.

1,384 Public Servants and Community Representatives Improve Their Governance Skills

Since April 2005, USAID-LGSP has provided 1,384 local government officials and community leaders with the training and skills they need to help rebuild Aceh based on a foundation of good governance. The skills and training are aimed at improving transparency, civic engagement and responsive planning and budgeting for service recovery.

Mohammad Bisri, an LGSP training specialist based in Aceh, stated that the participants came from local government executive departments and councils (70 percent), and civil society and the media (30 percent), ten percent of all participants are women, a level that LGSP hopes to double in the coming year.

Mirza Hasan, LGSP's Regional Coordinator in Aceh, emphasized LGSP's commitment to assisting local governments and communities in their recovery efforts in Aceh. "Our assistance will enable local governments improve governance and to plan and manage needed public services to improve the plight of the citizens in our partner jurisdiction of Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, Aceh Barat, Nagan Raya and Aceh Jaya."

Mr. Hasan further said that USAID-LGSP technical assistance programs include improving local planning and budgeting based on community priorities, improved transparency in managing financial resources, legislative drafting assistance for coun-



Acehese women's group enthusiastically discuss their region's situation

cils, service management improvement with measurable outcomes, improving citizen participation in the recovery effort, as well as improving the quality of information available to citizens on local government recovery programming.

Examples of LGSP assistance that bring communities and local government together include spatial planning coordination assistance to areas hit by the earthquake and tsunami. "With this program, we want to speed up the rehabilitation and reconstruction process to get people resettled in safe communities. Spatial planning is a reference point to rebuild the disaster hit areas," Mr. Hasan said.

Interview

Interview with **Meuraxa Sub-district Head Drs.TarmiziYahya, MM**

“Forum Results in Less Overlap”

The earthquake and tsunami of December 26, 2004 destroyed much of Aceh. Nearly 200,000 people died or are missing, and some 400,000 people lost their homes and property. Clean water and sanitation facilities, roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, telecommunications, and electricity lines were severely damaged. One of the hardest hit areas in Banda Aceh is Meuraxa, and rebuilding will require commitment and cooperation between the community and the local government, along with accurate data and information for effective decision making.

Such coordination can help limit overlap in programs and reduce wasted resources. It can ensure that programs are responsive to real community needs. “Most importantly, community members can optimize their role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their own community,” Meuraxa Sub-district Head, Tarmizi Yahya, said in a recent interview. He was accompanied by his secretary Bachtiar.

To facilitate direct community involvement in the recovery of the devastated sub-district, Tarmizi turned to USAID’s LGSP to help him organize a community forum, the *Meuraxa Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Committee* (KORREXA). The forum functions as an information center, a place to file complaints, and a setting to resolve community problems. It features an up-to-date sub-district map, a list of needs for community members affected by the tsunami, and the transparent reporting of NGO and government project progress in the area. The group is currently working on establishing community radio programs and bulletins to provide more information to community members.

Managed by the sub-district administration and citizen volunteers, and assisted by NGOs, the forum provides an open venue for communication. “We all can sit and talk about our problems in KORREXA,” Tarmizi said. He added that the initia-



tive has greatly benefited the sub-district by providing accurate information on the redevelopment process in Meuraxa, community-initiated activities, and needs of the citizens. “We realize that this should be the sub-district administration task. But after the tsunami, it is difficult for us to do so. Therefore, this program (KORREXA) is very helpful,” Tarmizi said.

The immediate benefit is improved coordination between NGO and local government programs to eliminate overlap and to ensure that citizen’s needs are met. “In the past, some villages were untouched by NGOs, while other villages got many projects from NGOs. Now we can coordinate with NGOs, thanks to the data we have from KORREXA,” Tarmizi said.

Another benefit is that the forum is regularly used to resolve disputes between various parties. In Punge Ujong village, for example, people were angry at an NGO because of delays in initiating promised projects in the village. “Through this forum, we facilitated a meeting between the people and the NGO. After that, the people were able to understand the difficulty faced by the NGO and the NGO could get back to work,” Tarmizi’s secretary Bachtiar said.

Based in the benefits to date, Tarmizi hopes that the forum will become an extension of the sub-district. He also indicated the intent of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) to replicate the forum in other sub-districts. “We thank USAID-LGSP which has helped us facilitate the establishment of KORREXA,” Tarmizi added.